ARTHUR "DOC" HARRIS

Doc Harris

Dr. Arthur K. Harris gave throughout his life to local athletics and the medical needs of the community

By CHRIS CLOHESSY
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Physician, benevolent, benefactor, football fan . . . all are terms that describe a man who will forever be remembered as Doc Harris.

When Dr. Arthur K. Harris died in 1990 at the age of 96, the community lost a man who committed himself to the well-being of its citizens.

Affectionately known as Doc Harris, the longtime local doctor is remembered by many for support of local athletics. From the 1930s until he retired in 1981, Harris offered free physicals to any athlete wanting to turn out for high school sports.

Following Harris' death, the late local historian, Vincent Ast, was quoted in a Post-Record article recalling a conversation between himself and the doctor: "I asked him once in his office why he did it. 'Doc,' I said, 'if you charged what you're supposed to, you would be a very wealthy man. He looked at me, scowled, and said, 'What's money?'

"He wasn't affluent in money, but he was a rich man in deeds," Ast said.

The man that would dedicate his life to helping others was born March 11, 1894, in Colfax, Wash. Later, after attending the University of Washington for two years, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and served as a corpsman during World War I. Following the war, Harris returned to college and graduated from the University of Oregon Medical School in 1926.

Harris began his Camas medical practice in 1930. Although it was during the time of the Great Depression, Harris is remembered for providing medical services to those who were without funds.

Aside from his charitable contributions in his chosen profession, Harris, a big football fan, also worked during his early years in Camas to raise funds for football gear for the local school system. Working along with several businessmen from the time, Harris was successful in raising funds.

Combining his love for football and his medical expertise, Harris also served for more than 40 years as trainer at Camas practices and games, providing help to anyone hurt on the field.

To acknowledge Harris' many contributions to local sports programs, the Camas School District named its new outdoor stadium after the good doctor in 1970.

In appropriate fashion, a dedication ceremony was held at half-time of a Camas High School football game in September 1970. Master of ceremonies George Henriksen delivered the following presentation during the ceremony:

"In grateful thanks for his service to the athletic teams of the Camas schools for the past many, many years, the Camas School District by action of the Board of Directors wishes to honor Dr. Arthur K. Harris and does hereby dedicate this stadium as the 'Dr. Arthur K. Harris Stadium.'

"Dr. Harris has attended every game when physically possible, looked after the injuries of both friend and foe and has freely given physicals to players of all sports. He has been an enthusiastic supporter of Camas' teams, win or lose, both for coaches and players.

"It is with heartful thanks that we, the citizens, students and personnel of the Camas School District make this dedication. Henceforth this stadium will carry the name of this man of distinction and respect and be known as the Dr. Arthur K. Harris Stadium."

Harris' commitment to the needs of others also extended beyond the bounds of athletics. During World War II, he was a dedicated Red Cross volunteer.

Another Red Cross blood drive volunteer during the war, Iris Howell, was later quoted by the Post-Record: "Every six weeks the Red Cross would come to Camas with nurses for blood drawings. We were required to get 200 folks to sign up for each visit. The Red Cross also liked to have a local physician on hand to supervise and help out. Of all the physicians in town, Doc Harris was there every time. It was quite an undertaking to get it all organized, find enough cots and have the people there to help. We never even had to ask Doc Harris for help. He would show up each and every time, without fail.

"I just want everyone to know how much he helped out, and how real proud I am to think we were all involved in such a worthwhile project."

When the war was over, Harris continued to focus on the needs of the community and helped with the formation of Community Chest — a charity that continues today.